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SUBJECT: AFRICAN LEADERS MEET BASHIR IN CHINA

Classified By: Ambassador Barrie Walkley for reasons 1.4 and d

¶1. (C) On November 10, immediately upon the Gabon delegation's return from the China-Africa summit, Ambassador Walkley met with Foreign Minister Jean Ping for a read-out regarding discussions concerning Darfur/Sudan. Ping said that on October 12, Abdoulaye Wade -- identifying himself as the Coordinator of the African Union "Comite des Sages" -- sent Bashir a document in French titled "Projet de points d'engagement des Etats-Unis et du Soudan." (FYI: In that document, Wade at times purports to speak for the US: "The US will begin, without delay, the process of lifting sanctions against Sudan President Bashir will be invited to the US for an official visit," etc.) The essential thrust of Wade's document is that the US will undertake to persuade all factions to sign and accept the Abuja accord, that there will be no NATO troops in Darfur, and that any UN force will be comprised of AU troops "meeting UN standards," supplemented by soldiers from other countries "chosen in consultation with Khartoum." Ping said all of these elements are important to Bashir.

¶2. (C) On November 4, Omar Bongo decided to take advantage of opportunities offered by the Africa/China summit and invited Bashir, Sassou Nguesso, Wade, Obasanjo and Alpha Konare to his suite to discuss Darfur. Bongo and the group pushed Bashir hard and demanded a written response to Wade's document. The three-page response, in English and signed by Bashir, was delivered the next day. In essence, Bashir states that Sudan is currently involved in a dialogue with US Special Envoy Natsios aimed at "finding a third track out of the impasse created by UNSC resolution 1706." He then offers "a solution within the formula AU plus a UN financial, logistical and technical support." He next calls for a "new omnibus UNSC Resolution, overriding 1591, 1593 and 1706" that will determine the expected role of the "UN Peace Mission in the Sudanese Region of Darfur."

¶3. (C) In Ping's view, this "AMIS plus" formula is the best solution yet put forward. Bashir accepts a UN Mission (the Ambassador specifically asked Ping: "Does Bashir accept that this is a blue helmet force?" Ping's reply: "Yes"). Ping says that Bongo, Obasanjo and the other "sages" believe that it perhaps can be made to work -- if pressure is constantly put on Bashir. The next step, according to Ping, is to get the response of the US and France (Ping said he has already spoken to Douste-Blazy) and of the UN (Obasanjo and Konare

will be pursuing those lines). If the responses are favorable, the "Comite des Sages" will request a meeting with Bashir in Khartoum. Ping said that plans are underway to expand that group, to include South Africa, Egypt (Arab participation is necessary) and Libya (Qadhafi can ruin things if he thinks he is being excluded). Ping said that he has spoken to the Egyptian Foreign Minister and that Bongo has already spoken to Mubarak.

¶4. (C) Ping also said that the Chinese have been approached regarding Darfur and have agreed to put pressure discreetly on Bashir.

¶5. (C) As this Embassy is not directly involved in the Darfur process, we do not know whether any of this information is of interest or significance. We report it at Ping's request. Ping says that Bongo is available to help move anything forward "either in the background, doing the real work, or in public." For the time being, Wade and Sassou Nguesso will be the public face of the initiative. Ping gave the Ambassador copies of Wade's document and Bashir's response; both have been transmitted to the Department.

WALKLEY